

CHAPTER V: THE FIXATION OF BELIEF (MS 407/1893)

§50. Though nothing is more insipid than allegory, a work of art, to be interesting, must be an allegory, without the reader's perceiving it. Don Quixote and Sancho Panza exist within every man's breast. *The Trois Mousquetaires* are made the man of feeling, the man of action, and the man of thought, corresponding to the three categories of Chapter II. The Bacchic train upon a Grecian vase is the train of thought. The music of the dance is the particular habit, or association, which governs it. And – what I meant to say – the revel at Brussels in Childe Harold¹ broken up by the awful sound of cannon, is the external stimulation which breaks up the play of free fancy and tends to obliterate and discredit whatever association may happen to dominate it at the moment.

Suppose that on any occasion I hesitate what to do, whether, say, to pay a car-conductor a nickel or five coppers. The man stands before me, an urgent stimulus, and I am thrown into an agitation (an infinitesimal one, I grant, in the present example) until I have made my choice.

§51. Doubt, however, is not usually hesitancy about what is to be done then and there. It is anticipated hesitancy about what I shall do hereafter, or a feigned hesitancy about a fictitious state of things. It is the power of making-

¹ *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* by George Gordon Byron.

believe we hesitate, together with the pregnant fact that the decision upon the merely make-believe dilemma goes toward forming a bona fide habit (60) that will be operative in a real emergency. It is these two things in conjunction that constitute us intellectual beings.

Every answer to a question that has any meaning is a decision as to how we would act under imagined circumstances or how the world would be expected to react upon our senses. Thus, suppose I am told that if two straight lines in one plane are cut by a third making the sum of the internal angles on one side less than two right angles, then these lines if sufficiently produced will meet on the side on which the said sum is less than two right angles. This means to me that if I had two lines drawn on a plane and wished to find where they would meet, I could draw a third line cutting them and ascertaining on which side the sum of the two internal angles was less than two right angles, and should lengthen the lines on that side. In like manner, all doubt is a state of hesitancy about an imagined state of things².

§52. **Doubt is an uneasy condition from which we struggle to free ourselves.** In this, it is like any other stimulus. It is true that just as men may, for the sake of the pleasures of the table, like to be hungry and take means to make themselves so, although hunger always involves a desire to fill the stomach, so for the sake of the pleasures of inquiry men may like to seek out doubts. Yet, for all that, doubt essentially involves a struggle to escape it.

² Minute diagram illustrating the geometrical example.

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A belief, on the other hand, is a habit according to which we shall behave in a certain way on occasions of a certain description. The Assassins, or followers of the Old Man of the Mountain, used to rush to death at his least command because they believed that obedience to him would ensure everlasting felicity. Had they doubted this, they would not have acted as they did. So it is with every belief, according to its degree.

§53. But belief is something more than a habit; for we generally know when we wish to ask a question and when we wish to pronounce a judgement. To believe, therefore, feels differently from doubting. Not only that, but we know pretty nearly what we believe. Let us recall the nature of a sign and ask ourselves how we can know that a feeling of any sort is a sign that we have a habit implanted within us.

We can understand a habit by likening it with another habit. But to understand what any habit is there must be some habit of which we are directly conscious in its generality. That is to say, we must have a certain generality in our direct consciousness. Bishop Berkeley and a great many clear thinkers laugh at the idea of our being able to imagine a triangle which is neither equilateral, isosceles, nor scalene. They seem to think the object of imagination must be precisely determinate in every respect. But it seems certain that something general

we must imagine. I do not intend, in this book, to go into questions of psychology (62). It's not necessary for us to know in detail how our thinking is done, but only how it can be done. Still, I may as well say, at once, that I think our direct consciousness covers a duration of time, although only an infinitely brief duration. At any rate, I can see no way of scaping the proposition that to attach any general signification to a sign and to know that we do attach a general significance to it, we must have a direct imagination of something not in all respects determinate.

§54. The irritation of doubt causes a struggle to attain a state of belief. I shall term this struggle inquiry, though it must be admitted that this is sometimes not a very apt designation. The irritation of doubt is the only immediate motive for the struggle to attain belief. It is certainly best for us that our beliefs should be such as may truly guide our actions so as to satisfy our desires; and this reflection will make us reject every belief which does not seem to have been so formed as to insure this result. But it will only do so by creating a doubt in place of that belief. With the doubt therefore, the struggle begins, and with the cessation of doubt it ends. Hence, the sole object of inquiry is the settlement of opinion. We may fancy that this is not enough for us, and that we seek, not merely an opinion, but a true opinion. But put this fancy to the (63) test, and it proves groundless; for as soon as a firm belief is reached, we are entirely satisfied, whether the belief be true or false. And it is clear that nothing out of the sphere of our knowledge can be our object; for nothing which does not affect the mind can be the motive to a mental effort. The most that can be maintained is, that we seek a

belief that we shall think to be true. But we think each one of our beliefs to be true; and, indeed, it is mere tautology to say so.

That the settlement of opinion is the sole end of inquiry is a very important proposition. It sweeps away, at once, various vague and erroneous conceptions of proof. A few of these may be noticed here.

1. Some philosophers have imagined that to start an inquiry it was only necessary to utter a question or set it down upon paper and have even recommended us to begin our studies with questioning everything! Now we may well think it (in)evitable that many of our opinions have some falsity mixed up with them; how can it be otherwise? And this reflection will make us modest and eager to learn better of these men who disagree from us. Still, so long as we cannot put our fingers on our erroneous opinions, they remain our opinions, still. It will be wholesome enough for us to make a general review of the causes of our beliefs, and the result will be that most of them have been taken upon trust and have been held since we were too young to discriminate the credible from the (P. 64) incredible. Such reflections may awaken real doubts about some of our positions. But in cases where no real doubt exists in our minds, inquiry will be an idle farce, a mere whitewashing commission, which were better let alone. This fault in philosophy was very widespread in those ages in which Disputations were the principal exercises in the universities, that is, from

their rise in the thirteenth century down into the eighteenth, and even to this day in some catholic institutions. But since those disputations went out of vogue, this philosophical disease is less virulent.

2. It is an extremely common idea that demonstrations must rest on some ultimate and absolutely indubitable propositions. These, according to one school, are first principles, broad axioms; according to another, they are first data of sense. But this is pursuing a chimera. We cannot do better than begin with propositions of which we have no doubt. We have to acknowledge that doubts about them may spring out later. But we cannot find propositions which are not subject to this contingency. We ought to construct our theories so as to provide for such discoveries, first, by making them rest on as great a variety of different considerations as possible, and second, by leaving room for the modifications that cannot be foreseen but (65) which are pretty sure to prove needful. Some systems are much more open to this criticism than others. All those which repose heavily upon an “inconceivability of the opposite” have proved particularly fragile and short-lived. Those, however, which rest upon positive evidences and which avoid insisting upon the absolute precision of their dogmas are hard to destroy.

3. Some people seem to love to argue a point after all the world is fully convinced of it. But no further advance can be made. When doubt ceases, mental

action on the subject comes to an end and if it did go on it would be without a purpose.

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§ 55. If the settlement of opinion³ is the sole object of inquiry, and if belief is of the nature of a habit, why should we not attain the desired end, by taking **any** answer to a question which we may fancy, and constantly reiterating it to ourselves, dwelling on all which may conduce to that belief, and learning to turn with contempt and hatred from anything which might disturb it? This simple and direct method is really pursued by many men. I remember once being entreated not to read a certain newspaper lest it might change my opinion about free-trade: “Lest I might be entrapped by its fallacies and misstatements”, was the form of expression. “You are not”, my friend said, “a special student of political economy. You might, therefore, easily be deceived by fallacious arguments upon the subject: You might, then, if you read this paper, be led to believe what is not true”. I have often known this system to be deliberately adopted. Still oftener, the instinctive dislike of an undecided state of mind, exaggerated into a vague dread of doubt, makes men cling spasmodically to the views they already take. The man feels that, if he only holds to his belief without wavering, it will be entirely satisfactory. Nor can it be denied that a steady and immovable faith yields great peace of mind. It may, indeed, give rise to inconveniences, as if a man should

³ From MS 189, complete in *The Fixation of Belief*, 1873.

resolutely continue to believe that fire would not burn him, or that he would be eternally damned if he received his ingesta otherwise than through a stomach-pump. But then the man who adopts this method would not allow that its inconveniences are greater than its advantages. He will say “I hold steadfastly to the truth, and the truth is always wholesome”. And in many cases it may very well be that the pleasure he derives from his calm faith overbalances any incon- [s/n 009 ? -a doubt in the place of a belief-] (67) -veniences resulting from its deceptive character. Thus, if it be true that death is annihilation, then the man who believes that he will certainly go straight to heaven when he dies provided he shall have fulfilled certain simple observances in this life (MS189: however he may have behaved in this life), has a cheap pleasure which will not be followed by the least disappointment. A similar consideration seems to have weight with many persons in religious topics, for we frequently hear it said, “Oh, I could not believe so-and-so, because I should be wretched if I did”. When an ostrich buries its head in the sand as danger approaches, it very likely takes the happiest course. It hides the danger and then calmly says there is no danger; and, if it feels perfectly sure there is none, why should it raise its head to see? A man may go through life systematically keeping out of view all that may cause a change in his opinions, and if he only succeeds, - basing his method as he does on two fundamental psychological laws – I do not see what can be said against his doing so. It would be an egotistical impertinence to object that his procedure is irrational, for that only amounts to saying that his method of settling belief is not ours. He does not

propose himself to be rational and indeed will often talk with scorn of man's weak and illusive reason. (MS189: "In our free country...") So he has a right to think as he pleases".

§ 56. But this method of fixing belief, which may be called the method of tenacity (MS189: obstinacy), will be unable to hold its ground in practice. The social impulse is against it. The man who adopts it will find that other men think differently from him, and it will be apt to occur to him, in some saner moment, that their opinions are quite as good as his own, and this will shake his confidence in his belief. This conception that another man's thought or sentiment may be equivalent to one's own, is a distinctly new step and a highly important one. It arises from an impulse too strong in man to be suppressed without danger of destroying the human species. 011 (68) Unless we make ourselves hermits, we shall necessarily influence each other's opinions: so the problem becomes how to fix belief, not in the individual merely, but in the community.

Let the will of the state act then, instead of that of the individual. Let an institution be created which shall have for its object to keep correct doctrines before the attention of the people, to reiterate them perpetually and to teach them to the young, having at the same time power to prevent contrary doctrines from being taught, advocated, or expressed. Let all possible causes of a change of mind be removed from men's apprehensions. Let them be kept ignorant, lest they should learn of some reason to think otherwise than they do. Let their passions be enlisted so that they may regard private & unusual opinions with

hatred and horror. Then, let all men who reject the established belief be terrified into silence. Let the people turn out and tar and feather such men, or let inquisitions be made into the manner of thinking of suspected persons, and when they are found guilty of forbidden beliefs, let them be subjected to some signal punishment. When complete agreement could not otherwise be reached, a general massacre of all who have not thought in a certain way, has proved to be a very effective means of settling opinion in a country. If the power to do this be wanting, let a list of opinions be drawn up to which no man of the least independence of thought can assent, and let the faithful be required to accept all these propositions, in order to segregate (MS189: separate) them as radically as possible from the influence of the rest of the world.

This method has, from the earliest times, been one of the chief means of upholding correct theological and political doctrines, and of preserving their universal or catholic character. **012 (69)** In Rome, especially, it has been practiced from the days of Numa Pompilius to those of Pius Nonus. Here (MS189: This) is the most perfect example in history; but wherever there is a priesthood, - and no religion has been without one -, this method has been more or less made use of. [Nay], wherever there is an aristocracy, or a guild, or any association of (MS 189: a class of) men whose interests depend, or are supposed to depend, on certain propositions, there inevitably will be found some rudiments (MS 189: traces) [, at least,] of this natural fruit of social feeling. Cruelties always accompany this system; and when it is consistently carried out, they become atrocities of the most horrible kind in the eyes of

any outsider (MS 189: rational man). Nor should this occasion surprise; for the officer of a society does not feel justified in surrendering the interests of that society for the sake of mercy, as he might his own private interests. Quite naturally (MS 189: It is natural), therefore, that which was born of sympathy and fellowship (MS 189: should thus produce) grows up into the most ruthless of powers.

In judging this method of fixing belief, which may be called the method of authority (MS 189: despotism). We put aside as irrelevant its immensurable mental and moral superiority to the method of tenacity (MS 189: obstinacy). These are interesting enough qualities; but this method is to be judged, like any other, by its success alone. And this success has been truly superhuman. Of all the achievements of man **013 (70)** this alone is majestic. The mere structures of stone which it has caused to be put together, - in Siam, for example, in Egypt and in Europe -, have many of them a sublimity hardly more than rivalled by the greatest works of Nature; and, except the geological eras (MS 189: epochs), there are no periods of time so vast as those which are measured by some of these organized faiths. Unify them in the sense of Alexander Pope's Universal Prayer, and who is the individual whose conceit shall stand up and place his dictum against theirs? These faiths lay claim to divine authorship; and it is true that men have no more invented them, than the birds have invented their songs. It is a relapse toward the method of tenacity that segregates them and blinds the ecclesiastic to the value of anything but hatred. Every distinctive creed was as a historical fact invented to harm somebody. Still, the upshot has, on the whole, been success unparalleled. If

slavery of opinion is natural and wholesome for men, then slaves they ought to remain.

§ 57. Every such system was first established by some individual legislator or prophet; and once established it grew of itself. But within this principle of growth lurk germs of decay. The power of individualism becomes extinct; the organization alone has life. Now, in the course of ages old questions pass out of mind: new questions become urgent. The sea advances or recedes, some horde which has always lived by conquest happens to make a conquest of consequence, the world at large. In one way or another, commerce is diverted from its ancient roads. Such change brings novel experiences, and new ideas. **014 (71?)** Men begin to rebel at doings of the authorities to which in former times they would have submitted. Questions never before raised come up for decision; yet an individual legislator would no longer be listened to. Never had the instinct of rulers failed to see that the summoning of a council of the people was a measure fraught with peril to authority. Yet, however, they strive to avoid it, they in effect invoke public opinion which is a momentous appeal to a new method of settling opinion. Disturbances occur, knots of men discuss the state of affairs; and a suspicion is kindled which runs about like a train of gunpowder, that the Dicta men have been reverencing originated in caprice, in the pertinacity of some busybody, in the schemes of an ambitious man, or in other influences which are seen to edify a deliberative assembly. Men now begin to demand that, as the power that maintains the belief has become no longer capricious but public and methodical, so the propositions to be believed shall be determined in a public

and methodical manner. Let the action of natural preferences be unimpeded, then, and under their influence, let men, conversing together and discussing their opinions, gradually develop such beliefs as are fittest to survive. This is the Method of Dialectic. In philosophy called the a priori method. It springs up from the humus of decayed religions. Greek philosophy first appeared when **15 (72)** myths began to shock people; and modern philosophy trod hard upon the heels of the Reformation.

Let us see in what manner a few of the greatest philosophers have undertaken to settle opinion, and what their success has been. Descartes, who would have a man begin by doubting everything, remarks that there is one thing he will find himself unable to doubt, and that is, that he does doubt; and when he reflects that he doubts, he can no longer doubt that he exists. Then, because he is all the while doubting whether there are any such things as shape and motion, Descartes thinks he must be persuaded that shape and motion do not belong to his nature, or anything else but consciousness. This is taking it for granted that nothing in his nature lies hidden beneath the surface: Next, Descartes asks the doubter to remark that he has the idea of a Being in the highest degree intelligent, powerful, and perfect. Now a Being should not have those qualities unless He existed necessarily and eternally. By existing necessarily he means existing by virtue of the existence of the idea. Consequently, all doubt as to the existence of this Being must cease. This plainly supposes that belief is to be fixed by what men find in their minds. He is reasoning like this: I find it written in the volume of my mind that there is something X, which is such a sort of thing that the

moment it is written down it exists. Plainly, he is aiming at a kind of truth which **16 AMANUENSIS ? (73)** saying so can make to be so. He gives two further proofs of God's existence. Descartes makes God easier to know than anything else; for whatever we think He is, he is. He fails to remark that this is precisely the definition of a figment. In particular, God cannot be a deceiver; whence it follows, that whatever we quite clearly and distinctly think to be true about any subject, must be true. Accordingly, if people would thoroughly discuss a subject, and quite clearly and distinctly make up their minds what they think about it, the desired settlement of the question will be reached. I may remark that the world has pretty thoroughly deliberated upon that theory and has quite distinctly come to the conclusion that it is utter nonsense; whence that judgment is indisputably right.

Many critics have told me that I misrepresent the a priori philosophers, when I represent them as adopting whatever opinion there seems to be a natural inclination to adopt. But nobody can say the above does not accurately define the position of Descartes, and upon what does he repose except natural ways of thinking? Perhaps I shall be told, however, that since Kant that vice has been cured. Kant's great (**bent?**) is that he critically examines into our natural inclinations toward certain opinions. An opinion that something is universally true clearly goes further than experience can warrant. An opinion that something is necessarily true (that is, not merely is true in the existing state of things, but would be true in every state of things) **17 (74)** equally goes further than experience would warrant. Those remarks had been made by Leibniz and

admitted by Hume; and Kant reiterates it. Though they are propositions of a nominalistic cast, they can hardly be denied. I may add that whatever is held as precisely true goes further than experience can possibly warrant. Accepting those criteria of the origin of ideas, Kant proceeds to reason as follows: Geometrical propositions are held to be universally true. Hence, they are not given by experience. Consequently, it must be owing to an inward necessity of man's nature that he sees everything in space. Ergo, the sum of the angles of a triangle will be equal to two right angles for all the objects of our vision. Just that, and nothing more, is Kant's line of thought. But the dry-rot of reason in the seminaries has gone to the point where such stuff is held to be admirable argumentation. I might go through the critic of pure reason, section by section, and show that the thought throughout is precisely of this character. He everywhere shows that ordinary objects, such as trees and gold-pieces, involve elements not contained in the first impressions of sense. But we cannot persuade ourselves to give up the reality of trees and gold-pieces. There is a general inward insistence upon them, and that is the warrant for swallowing the entire bolus of general belief about them. This is merely accepting without question a belief as soon as it is shown to please a great many people very much. When he comes to **18 (75)** the ideas of God, Freedom, and Immortality, he hesitates; because people who think only of bread and butter, pleasure, and power, are indifferent to these ideas. He subjects these ideas to a different kind of examination, and finally admits them upon grounds which appear to the seminarists more or less suspicious, but

which in the eye of laboratorists are infinitely stronger than the ground upon which he has accepted space, time, and causality. Those last grounds amount to nothing but this, that what there is a very decided and general inclination to believe must be true. Had Kant merely said, I shall adopt for the present the belief that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles because nobody but brother Lambert and some Italian has ever called it in question, his stand would be well enough. But on the contrary, he and those who today represent his school distinctly maintain the proposition is proved and the Lambertists' refuted by what comes merely to a general disinclination to think with them.

As for Hegel, who led Germany for a generation, he recognizes clearly what he is about. He simply launches his boat into the current of thought and allows himself to be carried wherever that current leads. He himself calls his method dialectic, meaning that a frank discussion of the difficulties to which any opinion spontaneously gives rise will lead to modification after modification until a tenable position is attained. This is a distinct profession of faith in the method of inclinations.

19 (76) Other philosophers appeal to “the test of inconceivability of the opposite”, to “presuppositions” (by which they mean *Voraussetzungen*, properly translated), postulates; and other devices; but all these are but so many systems of rummaging the garret of the skull to find an enduring opinion about the Universe.

§ 58. When we pass from the perusal of works upholding the method of authority to those of the

philosophers, we not only find ourselves in a vastly higher intellectual atmosphere, but also in a clearer, freer, brighter, and more refreshing moral atmosphere. All this, however, is beside the one significant question of whether the method succeeds in fixing men's opinions. The projects of these authors are most persuasive. One dare swear they should succeed. But in point of fact, up to date they decidedly do not; and the outlook in this direction is most discouraging. The difficulty is that the opinions which today seem most unshakable are found tomorrow to be out of fashion. They are really far more changeable than they appear to a hasty reader to be; since the phrases made to dress out defunct opinions are worn at second hand by their successors. We still talk of cause and effect, although, in the mechanical world, the opinion that phrase was meant to express has been shelved long ago. We now know that the acceleration of a particle at any instant depends upon its position relative to other particles at that same instant; while the old idea was that the past affects the future, while the future does not affect the past. So the "law of demand and supply" has utterly different meanings with different economists]. Changes of opinion are brought **20 (77)** about by events beyond human control. All mankind were so firmly of opinion that heavy bodies must fall faster than light ones, that any other view was scouted as absurd, eccentric, and probably insincere. Yet as soon as some of the absurd and eccentric men could succeed in inducing some of the adherents of common sense to look at their experiments, - no easy task -, it became apparent that nature would not follow human opinion, however unanimous. So there was nothing for it

but human opinion must move to nature's position. That was a lesson in humility. A few men, the small band of laboratory men, began to see that they had to abandon the pride of an opinion assumed absolutely final in any respect, and to use all their endeavors to yield as unresistingly as possible to the overwhelming tide of experience, which must master them at last, and to listen to what nature seems to be telling us. The trail of this method of experience in natural science for these three centuries, - though bitterly detested by the majority of men -, encourages us to hope that we are approaching nearer and nearer to an opinion which is not destined to be broken down, - though we cannot expect ever quite to reach that ideal goal.

21 (78/79? TYPED) SEE MS 189! This is the only one of the four methods which presents any distinction of a right and a wrong way. If I adopt the method of tenacity and shut myself out from all influence, whatever I think necessary to doing this is necessary according to that method. So with the method of authority: the state may try to put down heresy by means which, from a scientific point of view, seem very ill-calculated to accomplish its purposes; but the only test on that method is what the state thinks; so that it cannot pursue the method wrongly. So with the a priori method, the very essence of it is to think as one is inclined to think. All metaphysicians will be sure to do that, however they may be inclined to judge each other to be perversely wrong. The Hegelian method recognizes every natural tendency of thought as logical, although it be certain to be abolished by counter-tendencies. Hegel thinks there is a regular system in the

succession of those tendencies, in consequence of which, after drifting one way or the other for a long time, opinion will at last go right. And it is true that metaphysicians get the right ideas at last. Hegel's system of Nature represents tolerably the science of that day; and one may be sure that whatever scientific investigation has put out of doubt will presently receive the sanction of a priori demonstration on the part of the metaphysicians. But with the scientific method the case is different. I may start with known and observed facts to proceed to the unknown; and yet the rules which I follow in doing so may not be such as investigation would approve. The test of whether I am truly following the method is not an immediate appeal to my feelings and purposes, but, on the contrary, itself involves the application of the method. Hence it is that bad reasoning as well as good reasoning **are** possible; and this fact is the foundation of the practical side of logic.

22 (80?) Not that the first three methods of settling opinion are everyway at a disadvantage compared with that of experience. On the contrary, each has some peculiar convenience of his own. The a priori method is distinguished for its comfortable conclusions. It is the nature of the process to adopt whatever belief we are inclined to. And there are certain flatteries to the vanity of man which we all believe by nature, until we are awakened from our pleasing dream by some rough facts. The method of authority will always govern the mass of mankind; and those who wield the various forms of organized force in the state will never be convinced that dangerous reasoning ought not to be suppressed in some way. If liberty of speech is to be untrammelled from the

grosser forms of constraint, then uniformity of opinion will be secured by a moral terrorism to which the respectability of society will give its thorough approval. Following the method of authority is the path of peace. Certain non-conformities are permitted; certain others considered unsafe are forbidden. These are different in different countries and in different ages: but, wherever you are, let it be known that you seriously hold a tabooed belief, and you may be perfectly sure of being treated with a cruelty less brutal but more refined than hunting you like a wolf. Thus, the greatest intellectual benefactors of mankind have never dared, and dare not now, to utter the whole of their thought; and thus a shade of prima facie doubt is cast upon every proposition which is considered essential to the security of society. Singularly enough, the persecution does not all come from without; but a man torments himself and is often times most distressed at finding himself believing a proposition which he has been brought up to regard with aversion. The peaceful and sympathetic man will, therefore, find it hard to resist the temptation to submit his opinions to authority. But most of all I admire the method of tenacity for its strength, simplicity, and directness. Men who pursue it are distinguished for their decision of character, **23 (83)** which becomes very easy with such a mental rule. They do not waste time in trying to make up their minds what they want, but, fastening like lightning upon whatever alternative comes first, they hold to it to the end, whatever happens, without an instant's irresolution. This is one of the splendid qualities which generally accompany brilliant, unlasting success. It is impossible not to envy

the man who can dismiss reason, although we know how it must turn out at last.

Such are the advantages which the other methods of settling opinion have over scientific investigation – A man should consider well of them: and then he should consider that, after all, he wishes his opinions to coincide with the fact, and that there is no reason why the results of those three methods should do so. To bring about this effect is the prerogative of the method of science. Upon such considerations he has to make his choice – a choice which is far more than the adoption of any intellectual opinion, which is one of the ruling decisions of his life, to which, once made he is bound to adhere. The force of habit will sometimes cause a man to hold on to old beliefs, after he is in a condition to see that they have no sound basis. But reflection upon the state of the case will overcome these habits. And he ought to allow reflection its full weight. People sometimes shrink from doing this, having an idea that beliefs are wholesome which they cannot help feeling rest on nothing. But let such persons suppose an analogous though different case from their own. Let them ask themselves what they would say to a reformed Mussulman who should hesitate to give up his old notions in regard to the relations of the sexes; or to a reformed Catholic who should still shrink from reading the Bible. Would they not say that these persons ought to consider the matter fully, and clearly understand the new doctrine, and then ought to embrace it, in its entirety? But, above all, let it be considered that what is more wholesome than any particular belief is integrity of belief, and that to **24 (84)** avoid looking into the support of any belief from a fear

that it may turn out rotten it is quite as immoral as it is disadvantageous. The person that confesses that there is such a thing as truth, which is distinguished from falsehood simply by this, that if acted on will carry us to the point we aim at, and not astray, and then, though convinced of this, dares not know the truth and seeks to avoid it, is in a sorry state of mind indeed.

Yes, the other methods do have their merits: a clear logical conscience does cost something - just as any virtue, just as all that we cherish, costs us dear. But we should not desire it to be otherwise. The genius of a man logical method should be loved and revered as his bride, whom he has chosen from all the world. He need not condemn the others, on the contrary, he may honor them deeply, and in doing so he only honors her the more. But she is the one that he has chosen, and he knows that he was right in making that choice. And having made it, he will work and fight for it, and will not complain that there are blows to take, hoping that there may be as many and as hard to give, and will strive to be the worthy knight and champion of her from the blaze of whose splendors he draws his inspiration and his courage.

A loose page without number. It is the beginning of a **Chapter IV: The Fixation of Belief**

25 (29 struck off) I have to wait in a train station; and by way of pastime I read the advertisements on the walls, I compare the advantages of different trains and different

routes which I never expect to take, merely fancying myself to be in a state of hesitancy, because I am bored with having nothing to trouble me. Feigned hesitancy, whether feigned for mere amusement or with a lofty purpose, plays a great part in the production of scientific inquiry. However, the doubt may originate, it stimulates the mind to an activity which may be slight or energetic, calm or turbulent. Images pass rapidly through consciousness, one incessantly melting into another, until at last, when all is over – it may be in a fraction of a second or after long years – we find ourselves decided as to how we should act under such circumstances as those which occasioned this hesitation. We have formed a habit; and this habit is a belief.